

Geraldo No Last Name by Sandra Cisneros

BEFORE YOU READ

Who is Geraldo? Why has he made such a difference to the girl who met him only briefly? How does this little sketch make *you* feel?

LITERARY FOCUS: STYLE, DICTION, AND TONE

Style is a writer's individual way of expressing himself or herself. Just as people have different styles in dress and in speaking, they also have different styles in writing. Word choice and sentence length have an important effect on style. When you evaluate style, look also for how extensively the writer uses figurative language, dialogue, and description.

Diction, or word choice, is another element of style. Writers select words to help communicate their feelings and thoughts—and to create an overall effect. For example, if a writer uses the word *dough* instead of the word *money*, then we say the diction is informal and streetwise. If a writer changes the phrase “a charging elephant” to “a swiftly approaching pachyderm,” the style changes from informal to formal.

Diction also has a strong effect on **tone**, the attitude a writer takes toward his or her characters, or toward life in general. Like a person's voice, the tone of a work can be playful, sarcastic, affectionate, or full of remorse. Adjusting a word or two can change tone; if a writer changes the phrase “an odor filled the room” to “a stink filled the room,” the tone changes.

- Some writers, like Sandra Cisneros, have a very personal **style** that makes their work easily recognizable. As you read “Geraldo No Last Name,” notice how Cisneros uses sentence structure (even fragments) to create her unique style.
- Also, pay close attention to Cisneros's **diction**. Is her diction formal or informal? What effect does Cisneros create by using Spanish words?
- Finally, think about Cisneros's attitude toward Geraldo, Marin, and their situation. What is her **tone** in this story?

READING SKILLS: MONITORING YOUR READING

When you read, you almost “talk” with a text. By asking questions, you carry on a dialogue with the text. You can ask questions about a character's actions, motivations, or feelings. You can ask questions about plot, setting, and style. For example, you might ask, “Why does Cisneros use so many short sentences?” or “Why doesn't she give Geraldo a last name?” Then, read on to see if you can find the answers to your questions.



Reading Standard 1.1

Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand word derivations.

Reading Standard 3.11

Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism. (Aesthetic approach)

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

WORDS FROM SPANISH

Immigrants to the United States bring not only their food, music, and customs but their language as well. As a result, American English now includes many words from foreign languages. The chart below contains just a few examples of words from Spanish.

Words from Spanish

Word	Definition
adobe	sun-dried brick
barbecue	party or picnic at which meat is broiled
bonanza	source of great wealth
canyon	long, narrow valley between high cliffs
mustang	small wild or half-wild horse
patio	paved area next to a house
poncho	blanket-like cloak, with an opening in the middle for the head
ranch	large farm devoted to raising crops or livestock
rodeo	public exhibition of the skills of cowboys



Sandra Cisneros uses many words from Spanish in “Geraldo No Last Name.” For example, she uses the Spanish word *sa/sa* to describe a lively type of dance. How does this mixture of Spanish and English affect her style?

Geraldo No Last Name

Sandra Cisneros



Permanent Collection, Puerto Rico Tourism Museum, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico.

El Club (1990) by Nick Quijano. Gouache on paper (22" x 30").

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 4. Underline what the girl remembers about Geraldo.

MONITOR YOUR READING

Pause at line 6. What has happened to Geraldo? Underline the answer to this question.

She met him at a dance. Pretty too, and young. Said he worked in a restaurant, but she can't remember which one. Geraldo. That's all. Green pants and Saturday shirt. Geraldo. That's what he told her.

And how was she to know she'd be the last one to see him alive. An accident, don't you know. Hit and run. Marin, she goes to all those dances. Uptown. Logan. Embassy. Palmer. Aragon. Fontana. The manor. She likes to dance. She knows

"Geraldo No Last Name" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. Copyright © 1984 by Sandra Cisneros. Published by Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., and in hardcover by Alfred A. Knopf in 1994. Reprinted by permission of Susan Bergholz Literary Services, New York. All rights reserved.

10 how to do cumbias and salsas and rancheras even. And he was just someone she danced with. Somebody she met that night. That's right.

That's the story. That's what she said again and again. Once to the hospital people and twice to the police. No address. No name. Nothing in his pockets. Ain't it a shame.

Only Marin can't explain why it mattered, the hours and hours, for somebody she didn't even know. The hospital emergency room. Nobody but an intern working all alone. And maybe if the surgeon would've come, maybe if he hadn't lost so much blood, if the surgeon had only come, they would know
20 who to notify and where.

But what difference does it make? He wasn't anything to her. He wasn't her boyfriend or anything like that. Just another brazer¹ who didn't speak English. Just another wetback.² You know the kind. The ones who always look ashamed. And what was she doing out at 3:00 A.M. anyway? Marin who was sent home with her coat and some aspirin. How does she explain?

She met him at a dance. Geraldo in his shiny shirt and green pants. Geraldo going to a dance.

What does it matter?

30 They never saw the kitchenettes. They never knew about the two-room flats³ and sleeping rooms he rented, the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchange. How could they?

His name was Geraldo. And his home is in another country. The ones he left behind are far away, will wonder, shrug, remember. Geraldo—he went north . . . we never heard from him again.

1. **brazier** (brā'zer) *n.*: Americanization of the Spanish word *bracero*, used in the United States to refer to a Mexican laborer allowed into the United States temporarily to work.
2. **wetback** *n.*: offensive term for a Mexican laborer who illegally enters the United States, often by swimming or wading the Rio Grande.
3. **flats** *n.*: apartments.

INFER

Pause at line 20. Why is Marin so upset about Geraldo's death?

STYLE

What effect does Cisneros create by using the word *brazier* and the slang word *wetback* in line 23?

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 32. Underline the details you learn about Geraldo's life.

FLUENCY

Read the boxed passage aloud twice. In the second reading, try to express the narrator's tone.

Geraldo No Last Name

Style Chart Use the chart below to record examples of Cisneros's style. Then, review your chart entries, and analyze Cisneros's style below the chart. Not all the elements of style listed here may be present in her story.

Style Elements	Text Examples	Effect on Style
Word choices		
Sentence structure		
Use of figurative language		
Tone		

Analyze Style Select one or two of these adjectives to describe Cisneros's style: (1) plain, (2) conversational, (3) personal, (4) complex, (5) formal, (6) informal. Then, write two or three sentences telling which elements of style are key in creating this style. Quote directly from the story to support your answers.

Test Practice

Geraldo No Last Name

Complete the sample test item below. Then, read the explanation at right.

Sample Test Item	Explanation of the Correct Answer
<p>When applied to writing in general, the word style refers to—</p> <p>A how the writer dresses</p> <p>B a writer's attitude toward his or her subject matter</p> <p>C the writer's special way of using words and punctuation</p> <p>D a story's mood or atmosphere</p>	<p>The correct answer is C.</p> <p>Style is a writer's unique way of using language to express his or her ideas. <i>A</i> is wrong because clothing does not apply to writing. <i>B</i> and <i>D</i> are wrong because although attitude and mood are elements of style, they are not an overall definition of style.</p>

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of each correct answer.

- In "Geraldo No Last Name," Cisneros's **diction** is best described as—
 - formal
 - informal
 - technical
 - fancy
- The use of fragments such as "An accident, don't you know. Hit and run."—
 - suggests the way the narrator thinks and speaks
 - shows how poor a writer Cisneros is
 - indicates that the narrator is a Spanish speaker
 - reveals the narrator's sorrow at Geraldo's death
- You could most accurately identify the **tone** of "Geraldo No Last Name" as—
 - regretful
 - sarcastic
 - playful
 - awed
- Cisneros's **tone** suggests that she—
 - dislikes illegal immigration
 - thinks that immigrants do not obey the rules
 - sympathizes with people like Geraldo
 - thinks people are generally fair



Reading Standard 3.11
Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary criticism. (Aesthetic approach)

Test Practice

Geraldo No Last Name

Words from Spanish

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of the correct answer. Refer to the chart on page 239 if you need help.



Reading Standard 1.1

Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand word derivations.

1. If Marin is buying a *poncho*, she is buying a—
 A ranch C horse
 B cape D deck
2. When a person receives a *bonanza*, they feel—
 F embarrassed and ashamed
 G surprised and happy
 H upset and confused
 J sick and injured
3. Which word *best* completes this sentence:
The guests sit on a _____ built from bricks and mortar.
 A poncho
 B bonanza
 C rodeo
 D patio

Vocabulary in Context

DIRECTIONS: Complete the paragraph below by writing a word from the word box to fit each numbered blank. Use each word only once. Refer to the chart on page 239 if you need help.

Word Box

barbecue
mustang
ranch
rodeo

One of the featured events at the annual (1) _____ was cow-roping. Jack, who worked at the Lazy K (2) _____, was favored to win the contest. The horse Jack rode was very wild and unpredictable, almost like a (3) _____. About a minute and a half into the contest, Jack's own horse threw him! Back at the big tent, during the (4) _____, people ate their fill of hot dogs and hamburgers, all the while talking about Jack's bad luck.



Before You Go On...

Check your Standards Mastery at the back of this book.

Chapter 8

Additional teaching material for this selection is available in the *Holt Literature and Language Arts Teacher's Edition*.

OBJECTIVES

Students will—

- Recognize how the author's style affects the meaning of a text.
- Understand how an author uses diction and tone to convey meaning.
- Monitor their reading by asking questions about the text.
- Identify and understand words from Spanish.
- Build fluency.

TEACHING RESOURCES

Graphic Organizers,
Teacher's Edition, Section 3
Transparencies for Modeling
Instruction, *Teacher's Edition*,
Section 4
Audio CD Library



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Geraldo No Last Name

Sandra Cisneros ■ page 238

SUMMARY

In this brief story, a young Mexican American woman, Marin, meets Geraldo at a dance. She is the last to see him before he is struck by a hit-and-run driver. Because Geraldo spoke only Spanish, carried no identification, and didn't mention his last name, Marin cannot help the hospital staff or police identify him. Moreover, she cannot explain her motivation for maintaining a long vigil in the emergency room. This story is about love, but not necessarily romantic love. Marin's concern and compassion for Geraldo seem to be part of a love we feel for our fellow human beings, especially those in unfortunate situations. In the end, the omniscient narrator fills in a few details about Geraldo and people like him—their poverty, their loneliness, their family responsibilities, and the tragic anonymity of their lives and deaths.

Introduce the Literary Focus: Style, Diction, and Tone

- Bring in a few fashion ads from magazines. Write **style** on the board. Ask students to describe the “style” of the clothing in the pictures. Explain that just as they respond to styles of clothing, they can respond to an author's style of writing. Style is an author's individual way of expressing himself or herself.
- Have the class study the Literary Focus on page 238 of *Interactive Reading*. Write the terms **diction** and **tone** on the board and have students define them. Explain that diction and tone are part of an author's style. As they read, students should notice the way Cisneros's word choice, sentence length, figurative language, dialogue, and description work together to create her individual style.

Model the Reading Skill: Monitoring Your Reading

Explain to students that good readers have a running dialogue with the text. They monitor their reading by asking themselves questions whenever something catches their interest or confuses them. When good readers can't find the answer in the text, they make an inference, or educated guess. Use the following tips for modeling:

- Show Transparency 11. Read the first sentence of the story aloud. Use the following Think-Aloud to help students monitor their comprehension:

Think-Aloud I want to know about the characters. Who is telling the story? Who is the person called “he”? Where are these people? Maybe they're on a bus or a train.

- Read the rest of the story aloud, pausing to ask students for their responses and questions. Compare their reactions with those given on the transparency.

Develop Vocabulary

- Tell students to turn to Vocabulary Development on page 239 of *Interactive Reading*. After students read the introduction to Words from Spanish, say each word aloud and have the rest of the class repeat it.
- Call on students to go to the board to write a sentence using each word.

Model and Teach the Interactive Reading

- Read the title of the story aloud (page 240). Have students predict what the story will be about.
- Explain that Cisneros has written the story in a special way, so that the text sounds like an ordinary person telling friends what happened to Marin and Geraldo. Ask students to keep this in mind as they read the first paragraph.
- Have a volunteer read the first sidenote. Ask students what the girl remembers about Geraldo so far. Be sure they understand that the narrator, or storyteller, is not a character in the story.
- Have a volunteer read the second sidenote. Help students identify the details that explain how Geraldo died.
- Students can read the rest of the story on their own, pausing to answer the sidenotes.
- After students have finished reading, discuss their responses to the story. Ask them how Cisneros's style contributes to the story's overall effect.

Assess

The following material can be used for assessment:

- Own the Story, SE page 242
- Standards Review: Literature, SE page 243
- Standards Review: Vocabulary Development, SE page 244
- *Progress Assessment of Reading, Vocabulary, and Literature*, pages 172–174

DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION

Geraldo No Last Name



▪ Learners Having Difficulty

Explain that the author's informal diction reflects the way people speak—in fragments (“Pretty too, and young”) and nonstandard sentence constructions (“Marin, she goes to all those dances”). Students can take turns reading the story aloud, pausing at the ends of sentences.

▪ Advanced Students

Encourage students to identify the style of their favorite authors or their favorite books. Allow them time to share with others why their favorites are so appealing to them.

TEACHER TO TEACHER

In subject matter, diction, tone, and theme, this story is accessible. However, it has no clear plot. After students have finished reading, discuss whether the story has the plot elements of conflict, suspense, and resolution. Students should identify two conflicts: Marin's internal conflict (her inability to explain why she is concerned about Geraldo) and the external conflict (the injustices that immigrants from Mexico face).

Geraldo No Last Name by Sandra Cisneros

LEADER FOR HENJ

Who is Geraldo? Why has he made such a difference to the girl who met him only briefly? How does this little sketch make you feel?

LITERARY FOCUS: STYLE, DICTION, AND TONE

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Diction also has a strong effect on **tone**, the attitude a writer takes toward his or her characters, or toward life in general. Like a person's voice, the tone of a work can be playful, sarcastic, affectionate, or full of remorse. Adjusting a word or two can change tone; if a writer changes the phrase "an odor filled the room" to "a stink filled the room," the tone changes.

- Some writers, like Sandra Cisneros, have a very personal style that makes their work easily recognizable. As you read "Geraldo No Last Name," notice how Cisneros uses sentence structure (even fragments) to create her unique style.
- Also, pay close attention to Cisneros's **diction**. Is her diction formal or informal? What effect does Cisneros create by using Spanish words?
- Finally, think about Cisneros's attitude toward Geraldo, Marín, and their situation. What is her **tone** in this story?

READING SKILLS: MONITORING YOUR READING

When you read, you almost "talk" with a text. By asking questions, you carry on a dialogue with the text. You can ask questions about a character's actions, motivations, or feelings. You can ask questions about plot, setting, and style. For example, you might ask, "Why does Cisneros use so many short sentences?" or "Why doesn't she give Geraldo a last name?" Then, read on to see if you can find the answers to your questions.



Reading Standard 1.1
Students use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand word derivations.

Reading Standard 3.11
Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the use of figurative language on tone, mood, and theme, using the terminology of literary analysis (aesthetic approach).



ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

WORDS FROM SPANISH
Immigrants to the United States bring not only their food, music, and customs but their language as well. As a result, American English now includes many words from foreign languages. The chart below contains just a few examples of words from Spanish.

Words from Spanish

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poncho	blanket-like cloak, with an opening in the middle for the head
ranch	large farm devoted to raising crops or livestock
rodeo	public exhibition of the skills of cowboys



Sandra Cisneros uses many words from Spanish in "Geraldo No Last Name." For example, she uses the Spanish word *saia* to describe a lively type of dance. How does this mixture of Spanish and English affect her style?

Geraldo No Last Name

Sandra Cisneros



Permanent Collection, Puerto Rico Tourism Museum, Old San Juan, Puerto Rico.

El Club (1990) by Nick Quijano. Gouache on paper (22" x 30").

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And how was she to know she'd be the last one to see him alive. An accident, don't you know. Hit and run. Marin, she goes to all those dances. Uptown. Logan. Embassy. Palmer. Aragon. Fontana. The manor. She likes to dance. She knows

"Geraldo No Last Name" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. Copyright © 1984 by Sandra Cisneros. Published by Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., and in hardcover by Alfred A. Knopf in 1984. Reprinted by permission of Susan Bagnall Literary Services, New York. All rights reserved.

Pause at line 4. Underline what the girl remembers about Geraldo.

Pause at line 6. What has happened to Geraldo? Underline the answer to this question.

10 how to do cumbias and salsas and rancheras even. And he was just someone she danced with. Somebody she met that night. That's right.

That's the story. That's what she said again and again. Once to the hospital people and twice to the police. No address. No name. Nothing in his pockets. Ain't it a shame.

Only Marin can't explain why it mattered, the hours and hours, for somebody she didn't even know. The hospital emergency room. Nobody but an intern working all alone. And maybe if the surgeon would've come, maybe if he hadn't lost so much blood, if the surgeon had only come, they would know who to notify and where.

But what difference does it make? He wasn't anything to her. He wasn't her boyfriend or anything like that. Just another brazier¹ who didn't speak English. Just another wetback.² You know the kind. The ones who always look ashamed. And what was she doing out at 3:00 A.M. anyway? Marin who was sent home with her coat and some aspirin. How does she explain?

She met him at a dance. Geraldo in his shiny shirt and green pants. Geraldo going to a dance.

What does it matter?

They never saw the kitchenettes. They never knew about the two-room flats³ and sleeping rooms he rented, the weekly money orders sent home, the currency exchange. How could they?

His name was Geraldo. And his home is in another country. The ones he left behind are far away, will wonder, shrug, remember. Geraldo—he went north . . . we never heard from him again.

Pause at line 20. Why is Marin so upset about Geraldo's death?

Possible responses:

- She had instantly liked him; she is upset that she can't help to locate and inform his family.

What effect does Cisneros create by using the word *brazier* and the slang word *wetback* in line 23?

- These scornful words suggest that society did not value Geraldo because he was a laborer and an illegal alien.

Pause at line 32. Underline the details you learn about Geraldo's life.

Read the boxed passage aloud twice. In the second reading, try to express the narrator's tone.

- brazier** (brai'zer) *n.*: Americanization of the Spanish word *bracero*, used in the United States to refer to a Mexican laborer allowed into the United States temporarily to work.
- wetback** *n.*: offensive term for a Mexican laborer who illegally enters the United States, often by swimming or wading the Rio Grande.
- flats** *n.*: apartments.

OWN THE STORY

Geraldo No Last Name

Style Chart Use the chart below to record examples of Cisneros's style. Then, review your chart entries, and analyze Cisneros's style below the chart. Not all the elements of style listed here may be present in her story.

Sample responses appear below.

Style Elements	Text Examples	Effect on Style
Word choices	rancheras, wetback, shiny shirt	gives flavor of Spanish-speaking immigrant culture
Sentence structure	"No address. No name. Nothing in his pockets. Ain't it a shame."	Fragments plus some long sentences sound like a person's thoughts.
Use of figurative language	none	The style is "realistic."
Tone	"You know the kind. The ones who always look ashamed."	tone of sadness, regret, some anger

Analyze Style Select one or two of these adjectives to describe Cisneros's style: (1) plain, (2) conversational, (3) personal, (4) complex, (5) formal, (6) informal. Then, write two or three sentences telling which elements of style are key in creating this style. Quote directly from the story to support your answers.

The author's style is conversational and informal. She uses fragments like "No address" and slang like "Ain't it a shame."

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Part 1

Chapter 8: Literary Criticism: Evaluating Style

Standards Review

LITERATURE

Test Practice

Geraldo No Last Name

Complete the sample test item below. Then, read the explanation at right.

Sample Test Item	Explanation of the Correct Answer
When applied to writing in general, the word style refers to— A how the writer dresses B a writer's attitude toward his or her subject matter C the writer's special way of using words and punctuation D a story's mood or atmosphere	The correct answer is C . Style is a writer's unique way of using language to express his or her ideas. A is wrong because clothing does not apply to writing. B and D are wrong because although attitude and mood are elements of style, they are not an overall definition of style.

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of each correct answer.

- In "Geraldo No Last Name," Cisneros's diction is best described as—
A formal
B informal
C technical
D fancy
- The use of fragments such as "An accident, don't you know. Hit and run."—
E suggests the way the narrator thinks and speaks
G shows how poor a writer Cisneros is
H indicates that the narrator is a Spanish speaker
J reveals the narrator's sorrow at Geraldo's death
- You could most accurately identify the tone of "Geraldo No Last Name" as—
A regretful
B sarcastic
C playful
D awed
- Cisneros's tone suggests that she—
F dislikes illegal immigration
G thinks that immigrants do not obey the rules
H sympathizes with people like Geraldo
J thinks people are generally fair

Reading Standard 3.11
 Evaluate the author's choices of style, including the impact of diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and themes, using the methodology of literary criticism. (Aesthetic approach)

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Standards Review

TestPractice

Geraldo No Last Name

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Words from Spanish

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter of the correct answer. Refer to the chart on page 239 if you need help.

- If Marin is buying a *poncho*, she is buying a—
 A ranch C horse
 B cape **D** deck
- When a person receives a *bonanza*, they feel—
 A poncho
 B bonanza
 C rodeo
D patio
- Which word best completes this sentence:
The guests sit on a _____ built from bricks and mortar.
 A poncho
 B bonanza
 C rodeo
D patio



Reading Standard 1.1 Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand derivations.

Word Box

barbecue
mustang
ranch
rodeo

One of the featured events at the annual (1) rodeo, was cow-roping. Jack, who worked at the Lazy K (2) ranch, was favored to win the contest. The horse Jack rode was very wild and unpredictable, almost like a (3) mustang. About a minute and a half into the contest, Jack's own horse threw him! Back at the big tent, during the (4) barbecue, people ate their fill of hot dogs and hamburgers, all the while talking about Jack's bad luck.



Before You Go On ...

Check your Standards Mastery at the back of this book.

The Bridegroom by Alexander Pushkin

BEFORE YOU GO ON

"The Bridegroom" is based on an old folk tale about a young woman who witnesses a terrible crime. She is silent about the crime—until she realizes she is to become the next victim.

LITERARY FOCUS: STYLE AND MOOD

Mood is the atmosphere, or feeling, created in a piece of writing. Mood can be described as scary, romantic, depressing, comic, mysterious, and so on. Mood is usually created by word choice. In stories, mood can be affected by the story elements themselves: by events in the plot, the characters, the settings, and the story's theme, or revelation about life.

- "The Bridegroom" is a narrative poem—a poem that tells a story. Read it once for enjoyment and for basic comprehension.
- Then, re-read the poem. What mood does this strange story create?

READING SKILLS: CAUSE AND EFFECT

A **plot** is a series of causes and their effects. One event causes something else to happen; it has an effect. That event causes another event to happen, and so on. As you read this narrative poem, watch for the **causes** of certain events. Watch for the **effects** of other events. For example, as the poem opens we learn that Natasha has been missing for three days. What do you later find out caused this event?



Reading Standard 1.1 Identify and use the literal and figurative meanings of words and understand derivations.

Reading Standard 3.11 Analyze the aesthetic qualities of style, including the use of imagery, diction and figurative language on tone, mood, and the terminology of literary criticism (formal, critical approach)

Name _____ Date _____

Selection Title _____

Style Chart

Style is the distinctive way a writer uses language. It is created through diction (word choice), sentence length and pattern, and the images and figurative language the author uses. These elements also shape the story's mood. The chart below lists some elements of style. Give examples from the selection you have just read. Then, describe their effects on the selection. Finally, describe the mood of the selection.

Element of Style	Example	Effect
Diction		
Figures of Speech		
Images		
Sentence Structure		

Mood:

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Reading Skill: Monitoring Your Reading

He sits across from me on the Number 5 to Woodland Avenue.

Monitoring your reading: Who is the narrator? Who is “he”? Where are they?

The subway rattles along the tracks. He’s reading a thick book and keeps pushing his long black hair back off his forehead. He’s young, about the same age as Alfred was when I last saw him.

Monitoring your reading: Now I know they’re in a subway car. I know that the man is young. But I’m still confused. Who is Alfred?

My dear brother Alfred would be sixty now, almost as old as I am. He always called me his favorite sister.

Monitoring your reading: Now I know that the speaker is an older woman, and that the man she sees reminds her of her brother. What happened to her brother? Is he still alive?

The last time I saw Alfred was the day he went off to war halfway around the world. When I get off the train, the young man with the black hair is still there.

Monitoring your reading: The narrator’s brother was probably killed in a war. That’s sad. Still, the sight of the man on the train seems to comfort her.